

**Interviewee: Otto Schmaltz**

**Interviewer: Thomas Saylor**

**Date: 2 September 2001**

**Location: living room of the Schmaltz home in Cottage Grove, MN**

**Transcribed by: Dan Borkenhagen, January 2002**

**Edited by: Thomas Saylor, March 2002**

Otto Schmaltz was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on 23 December 1922. After graduating from high school he worked for a local packing company before being inducted into the US Army at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, in May 1943. Otto completed Basic Training at Camp Barkley, Texas, and was subsequently sent to Fort Lewis, Washington, for advanced training as a medic.

He shipped out to Andover, England, in March 1944, and then participated in the Allied landings in France on D-Day, 6 June 1944, landing on Utah Beach. He served in the 31<sup>st</sup> Medical Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, during heavy fighting in France for the next several months, and was present at the liberation of Paris in August 1944.

Following the liberation of the French capital, Otto was posted to Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) in Paris; his unit was moved to Nancy, east of Paris, in January 1945. In the same month, Otto's unit participated in the Battle of the Bulge, seeing action in Belgium. Duties at Nancy continued until May 1945, when Otto's unit was designated for reassignment to the Pacific Theater in preparation for the invasion of Japan. Otto was traveling through the US en route to the West coast when the Japanese surrender was announced on 15 August 1945 (VJ-Day). After several months at Fort Benning, Georgia, Otto Schmaltz was discharged in December 1945 with the rank of sergeant first class. He later joined the Army Reserve and was called to serve again during the Korean Conflict.

At the conclusion of World War II, Otto returned to the Twin Cities area, working at Cudahy Packing Company for approximately nine years before opening a liquor store in the mid-1950s in Newport, Minnesota; he maintained this business until his retirement in 1983.

At the time of this interview (September 2001) Otto lived in Cottage Grove, Minnesota. He passed away in October 2009.

**Interview key:**

**S: Thomas Saylor**

**O: Otto Schmaltz**

**[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation**

**(\*\*\*) = words or phrase unclear**

**NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity**

**Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.**

S: Today is the second of September 2001, and I'm happy to be sitting here talking with Otto Schmaltz. Mr. Schmaltz, I want to first thank you for taking time to sit and talk with me. We've had a pleasant conversation already, so let me just ask you a few general questions to begin with. Can you say something about when and where you were born?

O: Well, I was born in 1922 on the east side of St. Paul. That's where I lived most of my life, on the east side of St. Paul.

S: Now you said your folks, your father anyway, came from Germany, right?

O: Yes he did, he actually came from seventeen kilometers south of Warsaw, Poland. But he was of German descent and came from a large German family. He came over here to this country shortly after World War I [which ended in 1918].

S: And then they settled, they eventually found their way to St. Paul?

O: That's right, they went up like all the German immigrants at that time, most of them went up to Canada. Worked up in the wheat fields and for farmers up in Canada. Then he migrated through North Dakota, down to southwestern Minnesota, and worked for farmers down there. He met my mother, got married and then moved to St. Paul.

S: So you were living in St. Paul when you went to high school?

O: That's right.

S: When did you finish high school?

O: I believe it was 1941.

S: And when did you join the military? Was that before or after Pearl Harbor?

O: It was after Pearl Harbor. In 1941, jobs were very, very scarce at that time. I finally got a job, I worked on a farm all summer out here, and then in the fall of the year I finally got on a job, at Cudahy Packing Company in Newport [Minnesota]. I worked there all winter, and of course on the sixth of December the Pearl Harbor episode took place. And everybody had to register, register for the draft. Then in

1942, I was still home and still on the job. And early in the spring of 1943 I got called in.

**(1, A, 53)**

S: You mentioned the Pearl Harbor attack. Do you remember what you were doing when you first heard that news?

O: Sure. It so happened that on the sixth of December, here the weather was beautiful. There was no snow on the ground, or nothing. And a group of our neighborhood friends and teenagers, friends that hung out, we were having a touch football game in the street, right in front of our house. Kicking a football around, playing in shirt sleeves, and it was just a gorgeous day. That's what I was doing. I was playing football, and I got in the house and my dad had it on the radio.

S: Let's start with your folks. What was their reaction when they got the news?

O: Well, my folks didn't have any reaction at all that I could surmise. Actually, the kids that were playing football, they didn't have any reaction at the time, either, because this was approximately late afternoon or afternoon, I suppose, when we heard the news about it. There wasn't any big reaction or nothing about it that I recall.

S: Did it cross your mind, as someone who was of military draft age, that this might ultimately involve you?

O: No, it didn't, didn't affect us one bit. My [draft] classification number was 1-A, I believe. We knew we were going to get called up sometime, but it was no big important thing. At that time, I'm sure, nobody knew the extent of it, or seriousness of anything. Because, first of all, we had not even declared war on Germany yet.

S: Well, you moved on a moment ago, and said that it was early 1943 that you got your letter from the government. Do you remember actually getting the letter in the mail?

O: Sure. I got the letter in the mail, and it said that's what we had to do, we had to report to Fort Snelling, [in Minneapolis,] Minnesota, on such and such a day. I can't remember the date anymore. We reported, and that was it. Being that it was Fort Snelling, Minnesota, it was a lucky break for myself, because we could go home at night.

S: So during your Basic Training, during your time at Fort Snelling anyway, you could just go home in the evening?

O: We didn't have Basic Training at Fort Snelling. This was a processing center. A processing center, where they gave you physicals, certain physicals. They gave you an IQ test. They gave you shots, if you needed some shot or something. They fed

you three meals a day and that was about it. In between classes or periods where you had to do something, they put you to work, cutting the grass or something like that. But this was strictly a processing center.

**(1, A, 113)**

S: Do you remember what it felt like to finally be in the Army?

O: We had no feeling about it, nothing of risk of being hurt or wounded or anything of that nature. None of us people, even the ones that I was around at the fort there, they never showed any concern for anything. The only thing that everybody was hoping for, was that they would get shipped to a Basic Training camp near home. Near home. But that didn't work out, because they usually sent the people from Minnesota to Texas, and the Texas people up here. So that went down the tube pretty quickly (*laughs*).

S: Was there, if not a sense of danger, a sense of excitement, to finally be involved?

O: No, I don't think so, not amongst some of the people that I hung out with out here anyway. There was no such thing as excitement, it was just a process they went through and they did. They showed up here for this thing, that class, or this class. And that was about it.

S: Did your folks have any reaction to you shipping out?

O: No, I was the oldest kid in the family, and we never talked about it. We never talked about it. It was one less income, because I had a job and was contributing to my family at home. And so from that point of view it was a little less income.

S: How many siblings did you have at this point?

O: Four. (*pauses three seconds*) No, three. Because one of, my youngest brother passed away when he was seven years old.

S: So there was your folks, and three other siblings, and yourself. You joined the Army, or you were drafted into the Army, in early '43. Processed through Fort Snelling, went home in the evening. Well, that must have come to an end--you shipped out somewhere for Basic Training, I assume?

O: Yes, they would ship you out, oh, in my particular case, you went home the night before and the next morning you got to camp and they read the orders while you were in formation. They read the orders who was going, and where. And if your name wasn't called, you had the day off, the day belonged to you. You went on a work detail or laid around, or didn't do anything, or whatnot. Until the next morning. They called the formation again and they'd tell you where you were going or who was going.

S: Well, what news did you hear?

O: Well, I heard that I was going to Camp Barkley, Texas.

S: Sure enough, the guys from Minnesota went to Texas.

O: Yeah, in the morning report, morning orders, I was going to Camp Barkley, Texas, and to get ready, to make any phone calls you wanted you to make, and get your duffel bag packed, and that was it. As I remember, people even would put in their duffel bag things like civilian shoes, rather than Army boots. They were going to Basic Training, but they put civilian shoes in, they took civilian clothing along. Some even tried to sneak a little bottle [of alcohol] along (*laughs*).

S: Where'd they think they were going?

O: They thought they were going on a picnic probably. It was no picnic.

S: You took the train down to Texas?

O: That's right. They put us on buses and took us from Fort Snelling to the St. Paul Union Depot. And there we went on as I recall, a Great Western train, a passenger car. It had about twenty cars on it, very, very long. And I was fortunate to get a, fortunate and unfortunate, to get a window seat, because the train was parked in the station quite a while. It took a long time to load a twenty car train. So after they got it loaded, I had a window seat, and everybody pushed the windows up. In those days on the railroad cars, you could push the window up, and lean out the window. There was no sending off or anything like that, because at the depot, you got on the concourse and you went down the concourse, and you went down to track fifteen or twenty, and went down the steps and onto the train. The guy showed you where to go and there you went. You threw your duffel bag in, and a short time later the train pulled out and went through, I forget, over the Mississippi River and down through South St. Paul and down through Inver Grove Heights, and down through Randolph, Minnesota, and straight down to Texas.

**(1, A, 202)**

S: Texas--was that a new part of the country for you?

O: I'd never been there at all, no. (*pauses three seconds*) I went to Oklahoma once, but that's a long way from Texas! (*laughs*)

S: Was this your first extended period of time away from home?

O: Yes, it was. I'd been on small trips, fishing trips up North [in Minnesota]. Things like that, out to North and South Dakota, but that was about it.

S: What was it like being in a different setting suddenly?

O: Well, of course, everything was new. And it was different. I remember, I think I got down there to Texas around the fifteenth of May, and it rained real hard the night before we got there, so everything there was red mud. The train pulled into a little down right next to the camp, which was called View, Texas. This was about a twenty car train, so the engine stuck out one side of the city limits on one part of town and the last car was on the other side of the town. That's how small that town was! And it never rained another drop until I left in September, the end of September. It never rained another drop of rain.

S: How were the temperatures down there?

O: Temperatures were very, very hot all the time, in the 100s. But you never realized how hot it was, because you never knew what the temperatures were. Because there were no thermometers around. Radio didn't tell us about temperatures. And we weren't listening. We just knew it was plain hot. But one thing about Texas is, all summer long there's a wind. Continually, day and night, until about August. Then in August the wind subsides, and then there is no wind. That's when it really gets hot.

S: What part of Texas was this in?

O: Central Texas, right around Abilene, west of Abilene.

S: Was this a big training base?

O: No, it was not a big training base. Not like you'd call like a fort. You see, this was a camp, Camp Barkley. It was temporary camp. They were all knocked down and destroyed after the war was over. They just had to have places to put people. Plain barracks, no trees. Just simple company street, a theater up here, PX over there, this and that, just enough to hold three, four, five thousand people.

S: Pretty much put up for the purpose of the war. And after that it was superfluous.

O: Yeah. It was not like a fort. If it had a fort designation, then you were on a permanent status type of army installation.

**(1, A, 248)**

S: Do you have one really positive memory of Basic Training?

O: One thing we always laughed about was how it was so hot in the daytime that a lot of our programming schedules, or the hikes especially, were done at night. One other thing that impressed me was that these Mexicans that lived there, a lot of Spanish people that were in the service down there, they were, they could not take the heat. They did not have the strength to go through the obstacle courses, and through the rope exercises, and the climbing exercises. They couldn't, they'd fall

down, fall off. We always used to laugh at them, but we didn't know if they were serious or they were just putting on. But anyway, that was their problem.

S: Do you have an especially negative memory from Basic Training?

O: Well, no, I can't say that I really do. The only negative time that I had was after eight weeks, or ten weeks, or so, I volunteered to join a Ranger Unit, in Camp Bowie, Texas, which was a tank armored division place. I did not pass, I flunked out on that. I flunked out because I could not swim. I could not swim, that was one of the regulations. I could not swim. So they sent me to another fort down there, near Brownwood, Texas, that had a big swimming pool and instructors and stuff like that. But they gave me the (\*\*\*) because I'd get in the pool and go down to the bottom. Medically, it was something, my lungs were not big enough capacity, or something, but I could not swim. So they sent me back to my regular unit, and then they put me into medical training. That's how I became a medic.

S: Becoming a medic, was that something you chose, or was that something that was chosen for you?

O: They chose that for me. That's kind of a fun story, too. I don't know how they chose it. The only thing I could ever figure out was that I had a better knowledge of things like that. Because my work experience, working in the packing house, I was familiar with the sight of blood, familiar with cutting up animals and things like that. So they made a medic out of me. That's the only thing I could associate it with.

S: That's Army rationale, right?

O: That's Army rationale. They look at your spec numbers, and they don't even have one listed for your job, or your education. So I became a medic. They gave me medical training, and that's what I did.

S: Did you have the medical training at the same camp, where you did your Basic?

O: Where I did Basic, yes.

S: And now when the medical training was finished, what part of 1943 are we in?

O: Well, we're in October, say the middle of October 1943.

S: And from there, did you get orders to be posted overseas?

**(1, A, 300)**

O: No, our unit, the unit I was with was formed down there, and they put us on a train and shipped us to Fort Lewis, Washington, for additional training and whatever they had in mind. Up there in March, that would be in March of 1944, then they sent us all the way across country to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, and then over to

England. We went over on the *Queen Elizabeth I*, which at that time the biggest ship around, I guess. From there, we processed through, going to France.

S: So you stopped and were in England then in early 1944. Was that a collecting point for a lot of units that were going to be used in the D-Day invasion [in June 1944]?

O: It was the only collecting point for people that were going to make the invasion. We were never told where we were going or what we were doing; we were kept completely in the dark. Not that it would have made any difference. But it did make a lot of difference to a lot of soldiers, shouldn't say a lot, but some soldiers, who actually deserted. Soldiers that knew they were going to be in the invasion or go to Europe. They shot themselves in the foot, they handicapped themselves. They would swallow things to make themselves violently ill so they'd have to go into the hospital, so that they could not participate in the D Day landings. And that was quite common.

S: Okay, that's interesting. We don't often hear about large numbers of guys who had a pretty good idea of what was coming and decided to...

O: That's right, you don't hear too many negative things said about it, because every American soldier is a big hero. Many of them are not. A lot of people don't know that Eisenhower himself had signed the orders, and had, I think, forty-five or forty-seven American GIs given the firing squad.

S: What was that for?

O: For crimes. Raping people, murdering people.

S: In England yet?

O: In England. Yeah.

S: So as a medic, you were uniquely placed to see a lot of these injuries, self-inflicted injuries or things.

O: No, not really, because when the self-inflicted injuries came along, they were immediately taken to the first aid station or the hospital.

S: Okay.

O: I mean, why would I shoot myself twenty miles from a hospital? (*laughs*)

S: Yeah. Was there scuttlebutt about guys doing this, other guys knew that certain people were hurting themselves?

O: Oh yes, people knew about it. People knew about it, and people just had mental breakdowns, is what happened. They had mental breakdowns. You see, previous to



going overseas, and even over there, most of this, like in Basic camp, Basic Training camp and others, they regularly make you sit down in the theater and watch these horrendous horror films. People with legs blown off, people bleeding, people under shock, people getting hurt. A lot of people can't handle that. During these theater operations, these theater movies, maybe there was one every week or two weeks prior to us going overseas, people would just have to vomit, people would run up and down the aisles and out of the theater, because they couldn't stand it anymore. These kind of mentally weak people were the people that committed most of the self-inflicted things.

**(1, A, 352)**

S: Sounds like the army was almost keen to identify these people before the fact.

O: Well, that's possible. At least they want to harden you up, harden you up to what's going to be quite possible.

S: Where in England was this collection point, do you remember?

O: The collection point that we were at was near the town of Andover, which is in southwestern England. It was by a little town, not a little town, quite a good sized town, named Andover. We were in, all of the people there were in the woods, except officers, division head officers, and they lived in towns or lived in buildings and houses. But we lived in the woods.

S: To keep this undercover or...?

O: Absolutely. To keep this undercover and to keep it camouflaged, because German planes were flying over continually and looking for any accumulation of troops or people or munitions or gas or anything.

S: Now when again did you arrive at Andover?

O: Oh, I'd have to say maybe about the nineteenth or twentieth of March [1944]. It took the *Queen Elizabeth* four and a half days to cross the Atlantic, that's all.

S: That's fast.

O: That was really fast. It was an exciting trip. Do you want me to tell you a little bit about it?

S: Let's come back to it. Your unit and a number of others spent several months waiting in England--would you say you were waiting for what you knew was coming next?

O: Well, we were there on hand to do whatever they wanted us to do.

S: Was the idea of invasion of France something that was scuttlebutt or common knowledge?

O: It was common knowledge; everybody knew what we were there for, what the purpose was.

S: Well, I know from talking to you earlier, that you were involved with the D-Day landings itself. Was your unit moved all at one time from Andover to the place where you shipped out?

O: Yes it was. We were put on a train and went through Andover to a little town on the southwestern coast of England. I think the name of the town was Milford Haven. There we got off the train right at the dock, and they put us on a, they had a Red Cross ship, a hospital ship, a Red Cross ship there on the dock. And we got on the dock and that ship steamed out into the bay, out into the [English] Channel. We were on this boat for two weeks.

S: Two weeks?

O: We were on this boat just sitting there in the Channel. We were sitting there. It was a British ship, consequently we ate nothing but British food, lamb or mutton and kidney stew and things like that. So it wasn't very pleasant after a while (*laughs*). But we played cards, played cards, played cards.

S: Now on this ship, were not just...

O: No contact with anybody.

S: But there were other units on this ship too?

O: Well, I don't think there were too many other units. There was just maybe some attached people, like a few doctors and things like that.

S: For the record, what exactly unit were you with at this time?

**(1, A, 404)**

O: At that time I was with the 31<sup>st</sup> Medical.

S: And that was part of which Army or which regiment?

O: Not attached to anybody. It was attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, but the time and place of it I can't tell you, I don't know. Because they didn't tell us and we didn't know. We couldn't write any letters, we couldn't talk to anybody, we couldn't do nothing.

S: So they really were doing their best to keep this under wraps.

O: And they did. Not only our unit, but every unit over there was fenced in and nobody leaving, nobody contacting anybody, and nobody knowing anything.

S: So you weren't getting mail at this time?

O: From home, nope.

S: Nor were you sending any.

O: Nope.

S: Let's move forward. On June 6 [1944] your unit went ashore. Perhaps you can lead us through that.

O: Well, actually D-Day started, I believe, about six o'clock in the morning. It started off at midnight with the [US Army's] 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division landing at Ste-Mere-Eglise, which was a little city, a town, just off of Utah Beach, maybe a mile or two. So we were, we were on this ship, and we didn't get off of this ship. We saw all the fireworks and all the action. In fact, the big battleships were there firing salvoes into the beach and firing salvos at these big bunkers that you saw over there, and roads and everything of that nature. Then we were just parked out in the Channel; we're not going anywhere until about, I suppose, four or five o'clock at night, maybe six o'clock. It was about six o'clock when we landed.

But we saw the whole show all day, right from shipside. Our hospital ship had big red things on there, big red crosses on it and we got to go, we jumped off the ship and we went down the cargo nets into the Higgins boats. Higgins boats were bouncing up and down about six to eight feet in the air. We waited until they got up, and then went down into, jumped down into the boat and went into the boat. I had to be one of the first ones out of the boat, so I got to go up by where they dropped the front end of the boat. Then the driver we had got us in.

S: Which beach were you at?

O: Utah Beach. Where the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division landed. At that time there wasn't, oh, I want to say, wasn't that much action really, shells or anything like that coming in. Like I said, we landed on the wrong beach, or down farther than where we were supposed to, I don't know. Nobody knows nothing because nobody tells you nothing and you don't know nothing! (*laughs*) It's a surprising thing that almost everybody is on their own usually in a serious situation like that, so you just have to look out for yourself. You have to look out for yourself. We were expecting a lot of hostile fire and whatnot, but we never had any.

S: So the German defenders were no longer there or hadn't been there?

**(1, A, 448)**

O: The German defenders were in the bunkers, but a lot of them had been killed, I suppose, by the heavy naval bombardment, and even some [Allied] aircraft were there. But at Utah Beach, being the first one off the Higgins boat, I landed and first of all, the guy didn't bring the boat in far enough. He didn't bring the boat in far enough, and I jumped off the gate into water up to my neck.

S: Did you have a pack or equipment with you?

O: All my medical equipment. And that's probably, I landed and the water was up to my neck, and I just waded ashore. I waded ashore, one half a step at a time, foot over foot, and got to where I was exposed pretty good. Then we still hadn't drawn any fire of any kind, but we had all kinds of dead bodies, dead bodies that were lying in the water and dead, drowned. Most of them were drowned. They were not killed by hostile fire, or shell fire, or nothing. Even though the beaches were under control, German artillery could have gotten them, I suppose. But these people all drowned. There was another big, so called blunder, we called it a blunder, by the regulation, or Army people, officers and whatnot. Every guy, regardless of size, carried about seventy-five to one hundred pounds of equipment on his back. That included your rifle, that included your ammunition, and your extra ammunition and your belts and your belt and maybe a couple grenades, some of them had some.

When these people that were smaller of stature than myself dropped off of these Higgins boats, they landed in water over their head. And besides the ammunition and their regular pack, and their sleeping pack, and their poncho, and their pup tent, and all that crap that they had to carry, their shovel for digging. Besides all of this stuff, they had a Mae West [life jacket] strung across under there yet to keep them afloat in case they got into deep water. Well, when they got submerged and went in over their head with their steel helmet buckled on and everything like that, they pulled the cord on their Mae West, to get the Mae West inflated so they would float. But instead of floating, they went over head first because of all the weight. So there they were, with their feet sticking up in the air and head down and under the water and they drowned. With the heavy weight, seventy-five to one hundred pounds on there, they couldn't make it. There were dozens and dozens, the Army only gives exact figures at... Utah Beach was very small, but that didn't count the people that drowned. They just counted the ones from the hostile fire.

S: And those casualty figures were comparatively not so high.

O: The hostile fire on Utah Beach was not high. It was very low, but the drownings were very, very high.

S: Can you estimate the number of bodies that you saw there?

**(1, A, 496)**

O: No, I can't. I was just pushing them out the way so that I could get myself on dry shore. And walk up, get up on the sand to the first berm behind. See, every beach

has got a maximum line like this here (*motions with hands*), then there's a big three or four feet berm like, some that had grass on it and whatnot. Where the edge of the water came up at high tide and storms and whatnot.

S: That offered some protection?

O: That's where I stayed and got in real close there, until most of our people got in. Then we moved in a little bit. Not very far, but inland.

S: So these Mae West life vests actually worked, but because of the way the weight was distributed on the body, they spun the head down and the feet up.

O: That's right. Their head down and their feet up. Their face was down and they could not right themselves, because with their hands, with a rifle in one hand and... The only thing that saved me was the fact that I was 6'4" inches tall. I could touch the sand, which was, the sand was quite, very hard, with my feet, my toes.

S: Some of these guys were a lot shorter than you, right?

O: That's right. And then also the fact that I was a medic, and not a combat person. I didn't have any ammunition to carry. I had no guns, I had no ammunition, I had no grenades. All I had was medical packs, which are very light. Very light and compact. Not only that, but buoyant.

S: So you had some benefits that you hadn't thought about before.

O: That's right, that those other people ahead of me did not have.

S: Once you got ashore, did you begin to see, relatively quickly, casualties from hostile fire?

O: No, we didn't. You see, Ste-Mere-Eglise is where most of the hostile fire was. And right after, during the day, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division came in with their gliders and their troop carriers and landed right on the side of us, on the road. See, the whole area around Utah Beach was not hilly like at Omaha Beach. Utah Beach, it was flat and swampy. And so from the city of Eglise, from the main road, there were, I think, two or three or four corridors, like little one-way roads, which were built up out of the swamp. Up, and going down to the beach. Those were the ones we went on to get inland as quickly as we could. And that's where the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne landed with their gliders.

S: So you were to meet up with them as quickly as possible?

O: No, we were, our particular unit was there to be responsible to anybody, I guess. I don't know who, nobody knew nothing. Just move ahead and go down the main road and get down there and stay under cover all the time that you could.

S: From the beachhead, how did your unit, where did your unit progress, and when?

O: What?

S: Your unit you were with, you moved from the beachhead. You were in Europe on active duty for how long altogether?

O: Altogether how long was I in Europe?

S: Yeah, were you there til the end of the war then?

O: Yes. I was there until about July of 1945. And then our unit, which they called, it was a hot unit. We were, the war ended in May, I think May 5 was it?

S: May 8.

O: May 8. When the war ended, our unit was immediately being processed to go to Japan. Half our unit was sent to Marseilles [a port city in southern France], and my half that I was with went to La Havre [port city in western France, on the Atlantic]. Marseilles unit went through the Suez Canal to the Far East, and our unit was going to go through the United States to the Far East. But while I was home, on a thirty-day leave then, in August, they dropped the Bomb and the war ended, so we remained stationary.

S: So between June of '44 and May of '45, you must have seen an awful lot?

O: What do you mean by that?

S: Well, from the beachhead in France, did you move to different parts of France, or through Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany?

**(1, A, 548)**

O: No. We just moved up to Normandy. We had the breakout at Normandy at Falaise. On the thirtieth of July about, then we went to... We were picked to, to go to the liberation of Paris. The 4<sup>th</sup> Division went to Paris, and helped with the fighting in Paris, which was controversial at the time. But the 4<sup>th</sup> Division did go to Paris and went to... *(pauses three seconds)* didn't stay long in Paris, went right out the other side of town. You see, [French] General [Charles] de Gaulle took over the city of Paris politically, and caused a big controversy in upper echelon headquarters. In General Eisenhower's headquarters and the US and all over. Well at that time, the French army was under a general by the name of [Philippe] Leclerc. He was in charge of the French 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division, and they moved up into Southern Paris and were going to take the city. The Germans were going to destroy the city; they had every big building and every bridge mined. But Eisenhower at the last moment decided to send the 4<sup>th</sup> Division into Paris to help the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored take the city and kick the Germans out. Which they did; they saved the city. The city was not burnt,

bridges were not mined. A couple buildings, the grand palace was burned to the ground and a couple other big buildings, but primarily the whole thing was saved.

S: What was your personal experience in Paris at this time?

O: Well, I was with the 4<sup>th</sup> Division and I was on the outskirts, being a noncombatant person. I was on the outskirts, with these medically detached people. And on...

**End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 000.**

S: This is side two of the interview with Otto Schmaltz. Otto, we were talking about the liberation of Paris.

O: Okay, so this French General [Leclerc], he moved into Paris, and then Eisenhower decided to send the 4<sup>th</sup> Division in there also, which he did. We had already broken out of the Falaise pocket in Normandy, and were already moving east at a very rapid pace. So he diverted the 4<sup>th</sup> Division into Paris, to help. They had to be sure that General de Gaulle, who was anticommunist, remained the head of the Free French Government, which he did. Paris was liberated on the twenty-fourth and the twenty-fifth, on the twenty-fifth de Gaulle had a massive parade.

S: This is September '44?

O: August 1944. De Gaulle had a parade establishing himself as head of the government and the parade down through there. So Eisenhower sent the 29<sup>th</sup> Division, which had also participated in the landings at Omaha Beach. He sent the 29<sup>th</sup> Division down to put on a show of force, to march down the Champs Elysees, around the Arc de Triomphe, down to the Place de la Concorde. In support of de Gaulle, to show the French people, who were out by the thousands and thousands, that the United States soldiers and army were there to help them. And that was accomplished.

So they loaded us on trucks and drove us to Marshal Foch Avenue, which is one of the streets that goes into the Arc de Triomphe. We parked there just as a collecting point for all the parades that go down to Champs Elysees, because it's very, very wide. It's got a big sort of parking lot shoulders on it, where you could maybe five, six trucks abreast, and you could handle that amount of people. Well, he sent the 29<sup>th</sup> Division in, Eisenhower did, to put on a show of forces and march around the Arc de Triomphe and down. Our unit was with the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, of course, and we were on trucks, trucked down to Foch Avenue. We sat there all morning, you know, while the parade assembled. At about, I suppose one o'clock in the afternoon or so, we got in line and marched down with that famous picture you see, down the Champs Elysees, and right through town. Our unit went on a truck and we went to Pantin, which is one of the suburbs of Paris. At Pantin the Germans had a huge warehouse, two stories, two city blocks long. Five stories high. They also had it filled up with nothing but... I think they had two floors of liquor, two, three floors of medical and food, plus a lot of German loot that they had taken off the Parisians and from Jewish people, and that was stored there. Our unit, the 30<sup>th</sup>, was

taken out of the line right there and put us in a school, and we took over that big complex. We took it away, the 4<sup>th</sup> Division took it away from the Free French forces. This made them madder than hell, because they wanted all this loot. As it was, a third or a quarter of all the clerks, soldiers, they deserted and went about, didn't show up for weeks at a time, because of their celebrations. Because Paris was a home for many of them. So that was a disaster. In the meantime, Eisenhower had to furnish gas for all the people, had to furnish food for all the people. He had to haul in trucks and trucks for wine and champagne for these people to celebrate. And there General Patton stood outside east of town, out of gas. He didn't have a drop of gas to chase the damn Germans.

S: So what did you do with this complex? You were posted here, what was this to be used for?

**(1, B, 91)**

O: Well, it was one thing they did do while I was there, it took us, well, at least til January, about five months or so I was in Paris. It was my job to interpret a lot of stuff that we gave back to... like medical things. Interpret German labels and give the medical, our unit did, to the Free French Army. A lot of the stuff, they had a lot of things like furniture, pictures, and stuff like that; we didn't do nothing with that. But the food, all the liquor was distributed amongst the [American] GI soldiers, all the liquor was. In fact, there was enough there that, later, every soldier got a little ration card and you got one bottle a week of something. Lemon liqueur, cognac. Officers grabbed all the good stuff, so there wasn't much left by the time others came (*laughs*). So when that was gone, well on December 16, the Germans invaded Ardennes Forest and the 4<sup>th</sup> Division was caught sleeping up there, more or less. After they were overrun and lost a lot of people. You got to remember the US lost about eighty thousand people in the Ardennes Forest Battle. The Germans lost over one hundred thousand people, so they were really crippled up. When the Germans started moving back and getting pushed backwards.

The general push itself was put in charge of not [US General] Bradley, but [British Field Marshal] Montgomery. General Montgomery put in charge, the British general who had been all the way through and fought many hard campaigns in Africa, a guy by the name of Herocks. H E R O C K S. The first report that he wrote out, and this general was like the people in Africa, officers were right in the front lines. Just like in the German army, officers are in the front lines. There in the Ardennes all the officers were in the rear, and the GIs and the noncoms were fighting the war. He reprimanded it, but that's another thing that never got out much. To other people or the media or anything, but that's what happened. Once he got it going, they had lost close to eighty thousand people and so then what they did was, they asked, they didn't ask, they got every spare guy that they could get. Every damn truck driver, every warehouse guy, every cook, everybody that didn't have a gun, they sent him up to the front. So they sent me, they took my Red Cross card away.



S: Oh really?

O: Yeah, they took my first aid Red Cross card away.

S: So you're a normal soldier now.

O: Yeah. They gave me a rifle, and I did have a helmet of course. And then went up, they sent me up there to a little town around Stavalot, Stavelot or Stavalot, something like that.

S: This is late December sometime or...

O: This is January [1945]. Right after the first of January. I think the Battle of Bastogne was around the first of January or the end of December [1944].

S: So you were in Belgium at this point then?

O: Yeah. So then I was at Stavelot and evidently they needed, they just needed every available hand they had. My job was to work at a road intersection, directing traffic. Go down this way; who you looking for, down that way. Who you looking for, down that road. Sort of a crossroad.

S: Kind of a traffic cop.

O: That's all, that's about it. A military traffic cop. Then after that, or even by that time we got a medical outfit from this warehouse. We were supplying a lot of medical equipment to the front lines and we had to go from Paris east to Liege, Belgium. It was practically wiped out during the war, too. We went to Liege, and while we were there we got involved with a huge, huge traffic jam. People coming out of, from the front, out this way, and people going. The roads are not really big up there. And then occasionally a German plane would fly over and strafe the columns, set a few trucks on fire and what the hell not.

S: You were not a medic, strictly speaking, anymore?

O: No, I was not. Because they gave me a gun and told me where to go and who to report to. So that's how we got involved with the Battle of the Bulge.

**(1, B, 188)**

S: How did this situation develop, because by the end of January, the Germans were spent. How did this situation develop personally for you?

O: The first thing they did was send us all back to our own units. And my unit, in the meantime, had moved from Paris to Nancy, which is a town east of Paris, I think, about seventy miles east of Paris, if my memory is right, sixty or seventy miles. Maybe more than that. About that. I know Nancy is east of Paris, and then Reims is

northeast of Paris. So it kind of sits in between. That's where they sent us, and that's where we were, I think, when the war ended in May.

S: So from about January or early February until May?

O: Until May, yeah.

S: Were you a medic again now?

O: Well I was classified as a medic, but we didn't see no front line action, no medical action. See, the units had all been brought up to snuff and all new units and new divisions, new divisions, new divisions.

S: How did you spend your days here in Nancy? What was your job there?

O: What did I do in Paris?

S: No, when you left and went to Nancy. You were there for a number of months until the war ended. What were your days like then?

O: So that would be like February, March, April, and May. We were billeted in a small school. That's the first thing the army generally did is to put your soldiers up in small schools, because they were easy to control, they had one doorway. And they had a nice courtyard inside where they could set up everything they needed, like their kitchen, their supply tent rooms and stuff like that. See, I can't say that we did a hell of a lot of anything there. We just more or less sat there and did not much of anything. But we did know that Liberation Day, on the eighth of May, but before that, the community, the city, see actually it was Nancy, but I think it was just like a suburb of Nancy. They had a big, a building there that had a great big huge wine barrel. The damn barrel was as big as our living room here. Huge. Our GIs devised a way to tap this barrel, without them knowing it.

On V-E Day, when the war ended, they had a big celebration. The French had a big parade, they opened up the thing there and threw up, and then they found out that a lot of the wine was missing (*laughs*). Places like this where the barrel was, they didn't lock the doors or anything like that. They didn't have to. They weren't locked or anything like that. Shucks, we sipped wine, we were drinking wine maybe for two three weeks before anyone even knew about it. Of course the officers never knew anything about it, because GIs and officers don't mix. They do not mix.

**(1, B, 244)**

S: So this was an enlisted secret.

O: That's right.

S: Do you think the French figured out what was going on with the wine?

O: Yes they did, they found out. Evidently they must have had some type of thing there that did... *(pauses four seconds)*

S: Told them how much was supposed to be in there, or?

O: Yeah, hard to say.

S: Would you classify your time there at Nancy there, more deskwork or...?

O: No desks, just sitting around. Sitting around, fall out for morning formation and that was it. Just play cards, sit and play cards. See, when I was in Paris, I had a, not only had a camera, but I had a small radio. Paris was just like the Twin Cities or any other place, three days, four days after it was liberated you could go and buy bread, you could buy a camera, you could buy perfume, you could buy anything you wanted if you had the money.

S: So it seems to have readjusted to what we call normal civilian life pretty quickly?

O: Real quick. Very quick. I bought a small radio and I used to listen to, the BBC News was the only one. Because I couldn't understand French, but then at nighttime I could pick up some German radio, German radio and listen to German news reports and German people. I can't remember her name now, but the traitor that used to tell the GIs to go home and all this. You know, what the hell was her name?

S: You know, I'd know if I heard it, but I can't say.

O: I can't remember the name of her either. The Japs had one, too...

S: Tokyo Rose was the one in the Pacific, but the one in Germany, I don't know.

O: I don't remember her name, but I remember listening to her on the radio.

S: Let me move to another subject. During the time you were in the military, the services were still segregated.

O: That's right.

S: What kind of contact did you have with African Americans, for example?

O: See, we'd occasionally, in Normandy, we'd get strafed, but strafed or bombed a little bit. But generally these attacks took place at dusk, or very early evening, or dusk. The only contact I ever had was with two colored people, sitting on their poncho shooting a rifle at, up in the sky up there. I should have told them, "Don't shoot at nothing, because all you're doing is giving your position away to the sky up there." Because they were just making circles and swinging around up there. But that was the only contact I ever had with colored people. In Korea, it was a different story there. We had a lot of contact with colored people, but it was still segregated over there, too.

S: Really?

O: In Korea, yes.

S: If we go back, step back quickly, to the processing center here at Fort Snelling, were there segregated units there?

O: I don't remember seeing anything over there at all.

S: Basic Training in Texas, were there colored units?

O: No, all you had is Mexicans.

S: Were Mexicans, were they also separated from whites?

O: They may have been, but we were our own unit, and we never paid no attention to them. I imagine they had their own units, too.

S: Then if we jump over to your time as a medic in France, almost eleven months, again you had just minimum contact with them?

O: Right, I never treated or saw a wounded colored person over there. Not in our sector.

S: How about women in uniform? Women were doing increasing numbers of things, as the war years went on. Did you come into contact with women?

O: No, never saw any. There were some nurses on the hospital ships that we could talk to, that we talked to, before we landed. But I didn't see any nurses. See, we were on the front lines there. Then a man would get wounded, stretcher bearers would take him to the first aid station, which was generally behind our lines maybe about a block, two, three blocks sometimes. Because there wasn't much distance between anything. There may have been first aid there, but I think most of the nurses and that were in the hospitals. You know, in the...

S: Several steps back.

O: Yeah, several steps back, close to the beach, what they called evacuation hospitals. Yeah, there were no hospitals, anybody got hurt, they put him in the evacuation hospital and they got you over to England, and that's where most of the nurses were. But I never had contact with any.

S: So it seems like there were just a few, then, who actually were in France, and they were behind the lines as well.

O: Yeah, they were at the evacuation hospitals.

S: You alluded right here to the front line, and what was behind the front line. Were there times when you were, you might say forward, or on the front line and treating immediate casualties?

O: Oh sure. In the hedgerow country especially, after a few days... I have to tell you about an episode that was about five days after, six days after the invasion. The shooting, you might say, had dropped off substantially. On Omaha Beach they ran into a German panzer [tank] division which were doing exercises there, but the panzer divisions never really did arrive in our area for quite a long time. And when they did we were quite a ways inland.

What they did, what the US did was, one of the first things they did is, outside of Ste-Marie-Eglise, which was the first city taken, by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, just beyond that they built an airstrip, a small airstrip. They brought in all these mats, these iron mats that these planes used to land on. They put down these iron mats and made a small airstrip out there, and then they would hide the planes in the woods. But before they did this, the bulldozers went in and leveled off a spot where they could put these things down.

The only planes they could bring in was P-47s [Thunderbolt, single-engine fighter plane]. Now the P-47 carried one bomb, and that's a five hundred pound bomb underneath the belly. Now being that we were stopped and doing the hedgerow fighting... Hedgerow fighting was, we were just making headway maybe one city block a day. The Germans were using wooden bullets at that time, just for hedgerow fighting. See, a wooden bullet does not have the, the distance that a regular metal bullet has. These wooden bullets were designed especially for this hedgerow fighting, because the German would shoot it here (*motions left*) and it would kill a guy over here (*motions right*) or land in a guy, and it would blow up, it would splinter. Now these were the worst kinds of wounds that we had to treat. The Germans were not allowed to use these wooden bullets by the terms of the Geneva Convention; they were barred. But I could say that they used a lot of them, many, many, many of them. You can say, Otto, that's a lot of boloney, because we deny it. It is a fact, because I can show some to you. I have some, I brought some home with me.

S: These wooden bullets?

O: Wooden bullets. Well the casing is metal, but the projectile is wood.

*(brief pause while Otto gets out several of the German wooden bullets and we look at them together)*

S: *(holding a wooden bullet in hand)* This wooden bullet is intentionally designed to splinter?

O: It's actually designed so when it hits you, it goes in and splinters. And these wounds are just terrible, they're terrible.

S: What makes them so bad, the wounds?

O: First of all, have you ever had a sliver in your finger?

S: Yes.

O: Okay, you know how quickly it gets infected.

S: Right away.

O: Right away. And when that (*points to wooden bullet*) goes into you or anyplace it immediately splinters and ruptures vessels, and the only way you can do anything with it is to stuff a big wad of gauze or cotton into the hole and plug it up as tight as you can plug it. Then get the stretcher and have them haul him back to where they can take it out. And then you've got to remember after... like in our case, and all these people, showers were unheard of. You slept in dirty clothes, you slept with sweaty bodies. It wasn't that sweaty, but you slept in dirt. Our uniforms are dirty, you're dusty, dirty. Wipe your hands on your... You're just one filthy pig. When you get hit with anything, shrapnel especially is bad, because it pushed all that dirt and crap and all that slimy crap into your body. This is what causes quick infection, and quick bleeding.

**(1, B, 375)**

S: Was this something that you were keen to treat right away, as a frontline medic?

O: Well, as soon as a guy went down we would get him. We'd get him if possible. Most of the hedgerow people, some of them were killed in the open, and you couldn't get to them. You could not get to them, because they were out in the open and under crossfire. See, a hedgerow area is generally a field that's got four squares on it, four corners on it. The Germans would cover it, they had one machine gun on one corner and another one on the other corner. We'd get caught with a crossfire. With the wooden bullets, they couldn't shoot their own people, because the bullet would expire before it got there.

S: These wooden bullets didn't go as far?

O: They didn't go as far; they're not metal, they're wood. They went just far enough to injure and kill people. But anyway, getting back to this airstrip business, during the hedgerow country, people, they took some of us medics out and we went out to... They took my card away from me again. And they put me on a DUK, a D-U-K. You see them at Wisconsin Dells [recreation area in central Wisconsin].

S: What are they exactly?

O: DUK. They're sort of like a half boat and half truck. They go out into the water and they can load them up and haul supplies in. See, that's the only way they could get supplies into this area, because where they had the big docks and everything was up where the British were. So all these DUKs were equipped with a driver. A

driver, which was on regular level, and then they had a machine gun, a .50 caliber machine gun that could move, or was inside a big ringlet, a ring about three feet around. This machine gun traveled on this ring, so if you were the machine gunner, you could shoot at anything, or anything down the road in front of you or anything like that.

So one day, I think it was the second day I was on this duty, they sent us off the beach. We went down one of these little roads onto the beach, into the water, out to a supply ship, a liberty ship that was out there, to load supplies. They were loading, and we were taking on five hundred pound bombs onto this DUK. That's 4500 pounds, and my driver is sitting there, he's idling the thing. He's idling and keeping it close to the ship and they're bringing these five hundred pound bombs, hoisting them out of the cargo. All they got is one hook on one end and one hook on the other end, and a cable, and he swings it out over the side of the ship and puts it down into the DUK--I call them DUKs. Puts it down into the DUK, and blocks it up with some wood and whatnot. Okay, now the ocean, the Channel is fairly calm, it's not like D-Day, it's fairly calm. No big high waves or nothing. So we get nine of them on--that takes care of the whole line of the DUKs.

**(1, B, 421)**

S: Nine bombs, that's 4500 pounds.

O: Yes, five hundred pound bombs, and we go through the water, up this little road that we were on, and we go and we dump them off. We go up about, oh, two or three miles, and we go up there and drive into the woods, and then they take them off and stockpile the bombs for these P-47s that are going to be coming in, in a day or two. Because, see, from now on, they had to be flying from England. Every time a German plane came over they had to come from England to intercept those damn things. So what they did, they wanted this little airstrip here so they could not only bomb bridges, they could bomb towns, they could bomb German convoys, railroads, everything. So that went along okay.

I don't know how many trips we made, but on one trip, it was late afternoon and it was going to be, I think, the second to last trip we were going to make. It wound up being the last one. Anyway, I decided to go up and take the lift and go up on board ship, and look down. Gee, I looked down; that hold [the storage area on the ship] is about as big as this room or bigger. I'm looking over there [into the hold] and all I see down there is two, four white eyes. It was so damn dark down there I couldn't see nothing else. There were two colored guys down there, and all you could see was their eyeballs. They're down there and they're hooking these cables onto these five hundred pound bombs. I said, "How many do you got down there yet?" He says, "Oh, we're just about done. Boy are we glad that we're going to get the heck out of here." That's what the coloreds did. They put the coloreds to work on the quartermaster, and that's what their jobs were. Boy that was a scary job because...

S: These black guys were in uniform?

O: No, I couldn't see, it was so dark you couldn't tell. You couldn't tell if they were Navy or Merchant Marine or what the hell they were, but they were colored. And boy they were scared, they were scared. So we loaded up and we got the last one on and headed for shore. We get up there and Jesus Christ, right straight down this big stretch of road, here comes this Stuka 87 [German single-engine dive bomber]. Around the edge of the woods, he had us all lined up. I tapped my driver--you tapped the driver; if you wanted to go right, you'd tap him on the right shoulder; if you wanted to have him to go left, you'd tap him on the left shoulder; if you wanted you could hit him on the back of the head and he'd go straight ahead. So it's just like a tanker. So anyway, he stops and looks out and sees this Stuka coming down the damn road, and we're the only vehicle there. And he's gong to let us have it. He [the driver] bailed out on that side, and I was there with this .50 caliber machine gun. I'm no hero (*laughs*). I bailed out on this side. I hit the ditch and the God damned bullets from that damned Stuka just missed the vehicle, and went right between me and the ditch. Between me and the vehicle. I thought, holy Christ, if any had ever hit that damn thing, the whole damn county is gone.

S: Loaded with those five hundred pound bombs, you bet.

O: And it would have been. Because later, on our way to Paris, on the road, we saw where there was a whole area in a small village. When we went to Paris, we stopped [there] for lunch and there was a whole small hamlet, the farmhouses and everything was knocked own. Gone, burned. I asked a Frenchman there, and he said, "Truckload of bombs blew up here." That's what would have happened. So that's really one of the most exciting things that happened to me in Normandy, I'll tell you.

S: Did that Stuka pilot aim badly?

O: No, he just lined up wrong. He didn't aim badly, because he only missed the vehicle by about six feet, you know. Coming down the road like that, he just made a big bank around a grove of trees and he snuck right in at tree top level, because that's what the Stukas can do, and boom, if he'd have shot a cannon off, he probably would have got us. But he didn't.

S: He didn't take a second run at you.

O: Nope, we sat there for quite a long time, but he didn't take a second run. He just kept going, right down to the beach and over the Channel and back home, I suppose.

S: You had a narrow escape.

O: A very narrow escape, yeah.

S: Would you say that was your most narrow escape, or were there other close calls?

**(1, B, 476)**



O: Well, there's always times when you have narrow escapes. Like when I was wounded over there. I was hit with shrapnel in the arm. But the Germans, at that time, already had invented what they called the proximity fuse on shells. The United States did not have it.

S: What does a proximity fuse do?

O: Well, I don't know how best to explain it to you; I can't remember it all, it's been too damn long ago. Well, when the shell comes in, when the shell is shot from point A, from the cannon here, like say an 88 [German artillery piece], it goes over your head. It goes over your head, and you hear a sound like *(makes whistling noise)*. That's what it sounds like. You hear it, and you know you're not going to get hit; it's going to land way the heck out in front of you. Now when the shell lands in the ground, or wherever it lands, the nose of it buries in and the nose detonates. The nose detonates it, and when this happens it's a good chance that thirty percent of the charge or thirty percent of the shrapnel that's in there is going to go into the ground, right?

S: Sure, because it hit the ground.

O: Now thirty percent of it will go straight up into the air, right? Maybe ten or fifteen percent of it will go sideways. Divide it up equally, I don't care how you do it. Just don't get hit by it! *(laughs)* Anyway, the Germans invented what they called a proximity fuse, which can be set, and when it comes over it goes up like a howitzer goes up maybe three hundred or four hundred yards, and then when it comes down to a certain level, it blows up.

S: Before it hits the ground?

O: Before it hits the ground. Consequently more, a quarter or half of the shell, the shrapnel, the casing, and everything, goes down, and will kill people and hurt people. So that was another close call I had, when I got wounded there. Afterwards, the guy at the first aid stations says, "Well you were lucky, if you'd have got hit with a proximity fuse thing... You probably got hit by a piece of shrapnel that went up in the air and spent itself out, and came back down." And therefore it didn't have any velocity on it, because it was sitting there.

S: You got hit in the arm?

O: Yeah. Otherwise it would have gone right through, broke a bone or what the hell.

S: It broke the skin?

O: Oh yeah.

S: How big a piece of metal are we talking about?

O: About like that (*holds fingers one inch apart*). I still have it downstairs in my desk. It's about that big.

S: So it lacerated your arm but didn't break anything. That's without velocity.

O: Yeah. Well, that's what we think. If it would have had velocity, it might have been different.

S: Were you treated and stayed with your unit then, or evacuated?

O: No, no, no. Just bandaged it up and went right back to work, back to my unit, same day, same hour.

**End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.**

S: This is tape two of the interview with Otto Schmaltz on the second of September 2001. Otto, if we can, I'd just like to shift to some different themes. One of those would be to ask about people who you met during your time in the service. This could be at Fort Snelling, Basic Training, active duty, people who you might say made an impact on you, positive impact on you, for whatever reason. Can you think of a person like that?

O: No, I really can't.

S: No?

O: No.

S: Is there among fellow enlisted people, someone with whom you had a closer relationship with?

O: Well, there was only, after the war, there was only one reunion that I went to, of our unit, and people there. I met people there, people I knew quite well, but that was all. Then I guess, first of all, reunions are kind of hard to put on. They're a lot of work, not like a high school, where they're all there. Something national like this, they're scattered all over the country. Even our units or organizations that I belong to that have reunions, but I do not go to them, or anything like that.

S: When you were, during the eleven months you were in France and Belgium, were guys cycled through your unit pretty regularly? Was there a large turnover?

O: No. Our particular unit was a small unit. We were generally attached to other units. But we weren't like a combat infantry regiment where you had a lot of casualties, where you had to have a big turnover. Now when I was in Korea [during the Korean conflict], our combat infantry unit, our George Company, was annihilated three times. We had new people three different times, and then you don't get to

know people very intimately. You don't even correspond with people, because most of them are dead or gone.

S: Because that was the case, did you get to know guys in your unit in France fairly well while you were there?

O: Oh yes. You know, the thing about the service is—I don't care which one you're in—you quickly make a buddy or make a good friend. You find somebody that's the same as you are, you might say. If you're Catholic, you could wind up with a Catholic friend. Or Lutheran, you wind up with a good guy maybe you met him at the chapel. Or you met him on your job or something. But you make friends quickly. But the service has got a way of not letting you keep friends very long. Three or four months, or six months, and then, boom, the unit splits up, or this guy gets shipped here, you get shipped there. Then you make a new friend. You quickly make new friends.

S: Was that your situation, too?

O: Sure.

S: Did you, was there a guy, or more than one person that you found to be a pretty good friend for the time you were in the unit with him?

O: Well, yes. I had some good friends in the unit. When I was in Paris, for instance, I had a friend there that was from Brooklyn, New York. A very intelligent person. At one time, the father at the cathedral or church of the Sacre Coeur in Paris, when he was studying in America, had stayed at his house. So when we were in Paris, this fellow from New York, from Brooklyn, he got a hold of this priest, and this priest gave us a personal tour of the Sacre Coeur, which was very, very nice.

S: Was there a chance to do, what we might call, sight seeing while you were stationed over there?

O: Oh sure, while I was stationed there?

S: Yeah.

O: When the war ended, all the units, you might say, had trips, you know, to keep the people occupied. When the war ended, to keep them occupied, to give them something to do, they would sign up for a trip to Strasbourg [a city in Alsace, in eastern France], or you could sign up for a trip to Paris, or you could sign up for a trip to Rennes [a city in Brittany, in western France], or such and such a cathedral. You could go different places. They're generally all day trips, get rations and whatnot. So there was quite a bit of sightseeing, but after the war.

S: Sounds like the tour of the Sacre Coeur in Paris was kind of an exception, in that it happened before the end of the war.

O: That was the exception; that was private. That was different.

S: Well, with close friends or people who you were able to make their acquaintance, or become friends with, what kind of person did you find yourself attracted to? Who became a friend to you?

**(2, A, 75)**

O: People that were intelligent. In Paris, I became acquainted with a professor who spoke ten different languages. He took me many places when I could get the time to do them. He took me to places like the Palace of the Invalids, where Napoleon is buried. When Hitler got his revenge, and came to Paris with the same railroad car they signed the [Versailles] Treaty in, in 1918, he brought he same car back there. His primary ambition was to stand at the grave of Napoleon, and I stood at the exact same place that Adolph Hitler stood at and looked down on Napoleon's tomb, because he was going to be the greatest conqueror of all time. This was in 1940, in June or July of 1940 when Hitler did this. This professor showed me that and showed me exactly where he stood and what he did. So those kinds of people I glued onto.

S: Yeah, sounds like a neat memory too. Were encounters with French civilians common or frequent for soldiers?

O: Oh yes. Yes, French civilians and (\*\*). See, we were billeted in a school in Paris, in Patanne. In these schools, all the classrooms were on the first floor level, and the teachers live on the second floor. So I got to know a few of the teachers that were there. We never bothered them. In fact, they were more than wanting to talk about everything, or talk about America, or talk about this thing. In fact, one teacher was educated at Vassar College, a college on the East Coast. After the war was over, about '47 or '48, I suppose, she sent her daughter over here to Vassar. Her daughter came and took courses, or went to Vassar College. And while she was there she took a bus out and visited, up here in Minnesota. She stayed a week and we showed her around town and what we had to show her. So that was nice. People remembered. They are very good people; we corresponded for a few years later.

S: That suggests a kind of returning the favor. Suggests a positive relationship. Did you learn to speak a little French when you were there?

O: No, only (*French phrase*), how are you? Common phrases, that's all. Out of the little book they give you. The GI gets a book in each country you go to. You get a little book with common phrases and stuff like that. That's all.

S: While you were overseas, you were in England for a while and in France longer than that, how did you stay in touch with family and loved ones back home?

O: Well, just writing letters.

S: Are you a big letter writer, or did you not write very much?

O: Well I was, oh I suppose, it was more of a pastime. You had to have something to do, so you went in your room or you went wherever you were, and you wrote letters. See, you got free mailing, so you didn't have to worry about the free mailing. Then they had what they called V mail, which was, I think, a mail that they took a picture of, a film of, and sent them to the United States. Then they would blow it up into a V letter. These were good, because they were generally just one little page. You didn't have a lot of writing to do.

S: You sent a number of those?

O: Oh yeah, we sent a lot of those, to different people. You could decide to write a letter to a serviceman, oh say, once a month. But if forty people did that, that meant that serviceman had to write forty letters, right?

S: Right, you have to write back.

O: You've got to write back! *(laughs)*

S: Did you get a lot of mail over there?

O: Yeah, I got just from my family more or less, that's all.

S: Was it important to you to get mail?

O: Oh sure. Sure, you always wanted to know how the health of people were, and how things were going at home and whatnot.

S: How often was the mail delivered to you?

O: Oh boy, during the invasion time we didn't get any mail for a long time. I'd say a couple weeks, several weeks anyway. Because mail, I don't know much about the mail system, but I do know you have APO; I think it stands for Army Post Office. Number 223, for example. Number 223 was on a ship. That don't get on it at all. And then APO 223 goes somewhere else, you don't know where or whatnot. Finally, eventually you get letter or two.

S: So you might get stuff in bunches, or well after the time it was written.

O: Sure.

S: Did you really get any news over there, *Stars and Stripes* [official military newspaper] and that kind of stuff?

O: Sure, they had *Stars and Stripes* papers after a while. We got those, but it was just local news on. I was well informed with the news, especially after I got to Paris, because I had a radio. That made a big difference. They didn't broadcast, not like

familiar with our radios, but they broadcasted mostly at night. Evidently at nighttime the signal carries a long, long way, and that's why I could pick up radio stations from Germany and listen to German music. Germans were great on opera music and classical music for entertaining their soldiers. The BBC was more like, I'd say, light music and rock and music, like for Americans. See the station would only be on an hour, whereas German stations were on til ten o'clock at night.

S: Did guys read a lot, when there was stuff available, like books, newspapers?

O: Oh sure. Especially every ship had a library, but they were all paperbacks. Most of them were well worn.

**(2, A, 188)**

S: So they were getting some use.

O: Oh yeah. People were using them.

S: Otto, you mentioned a little bit ago that you weren't one who attended reunions after the war.

O: No.

S: Did you stay in contact with any individuals, or an individual?

O: Ah, no, not really. A couple of them at the Korean War I did. There's a fellow, his name is Andrew Rayna, R-A-Y-N-A, and he lives in San Antonio, Texas. He was with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, landing on Omaha Beach, I think on D-Day +2 [8 June 1944]. He went through Normandy, and he stayed with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, regular. And when they called up the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, I should say, or sent them to Korea—he was a tanker in Normandy, so he was a tanker over in Korea.

One day, I really didn't get to meet him, but I took a picture. We were surrounded by almost one hundred thousand Chinese people, at a village called Chip-Yong-Ni. Now at this battle site, we were completely surrounded, and the trenches were getting tighter and tighter. We had two tanks in our unit, our regiment, our company, and he was the driver, the commander of one of those tanks. There was a cut in the road like this here, through the hillside (*motions with arms*), and a cut in the road, and a road here (*motions again*). I took a picture of his tank and another tank, the only two tanks right on the road there. This is on February 20, fifteenth of February, or something like that. And I didn't know it was him in this tank at all until later, until that week. Finally we were surrounded for ten days, and we got rescued by a British tank company, a British cavalry company that came up and rescued us. So we were rescued. We went in the rear for a while, and this Andrew Rayna, I get a paper from the Korean War people [a veterans group], and he said it had his name in there, and it showed where he was. And I said, I got a picture of that. So I blew it up and I sent [the picture] down to him. So we became good friends, and we still correspond today. He calls me up once in a while. But I don't go

to any of the reunions, because I have a little difficulty getting around, and to go to these hotels and into this hot weather especially, it's bad news for me. Even if it's in San Antonio. But corresponding is enough.

S: Let me ask, after the war, for you, was it a conscious decision to not stay in touch or not be part of these reunions?

O: Well, I did, because as you know, for every front line combat soldier that there is, and I was a combat soldier in the Korean War, and a medic in the World War II. All these people ever talked about was, how fast this truck could go, or this, or that, blah, blah, blah. And never know nothing. I didn't want to be part of that, and I didn't want to tell them anything that I'd gone through. So I never really went to none of these local VFWs with their pancake breakfasts and all that stuff. It never appealed to me and I never...

But when I went to the [D-Day] 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, when Walter Cronkite [American television journalist] said you should start telling some of your experiences to people, so they can memorialize them and write them down for the future generations, that's what you should do. But see, by that time, by now I've only written one small book about it, but I don't have any relatives. I don't have any relatives, so...

S: Well, I appreciate you sharing the information with me today.

O: Yeah, well that's fine, I'm glad to.

S: Moving on to the last theme, which is the end of the war. And the initial question, about when President Roosevelt died in April 1945.

O: Yes, he died while I was in Paris. I remember it very well. It was early in the morning when they woke us up and our unit told us that he had passed away.

S: Did that news have an impact on you?

O: Well, I can't really say that it did. We were in the frame of mind that politics and the head of government, and Roosevelt was very instrumental in many things prior to his death. That is to say, the declaration of war against Japan and Germany, and the help that he sent to England and the help that he sent to Russia, and responsible for our being over there to help these people. We had a thought about it. But that was about it. Because I remember it was a Sunday morning and myself and this friend of mine from Brooklyn, we went to mass at Notre Dame Cathedral [in Paris] that morning, that Sunday morning, even though I'm Lutheran. He was Catholic, but he said, "That's all right, you can go, don't make a difference, a church is a church." You see, in the city of Paris at that time, there was only two Lutheran churches in the whole city. Everything else was Catholic. So it didn't make any difference to me, the only thing I was impressed about, the priest can be up there giving a sermon, and the people in the back are there selling souvenirs. (*laughs*) Even during mass. That always impressed me.

S: Now, a month later, not even a month, V-E Day, the eighth of May 1945. Now you were still stationed at Nancy?

O: Yeah, we were at Nancy, a little suburb of Nancy.

S: What do you remember about V-E Day?

O: Well, just that everybody had to clean up real good, they were going to have a little parade. We were going to be the only people in the parade because where our unit was, it was a little town. The French all had big banners and flags and all that stuff. In fact I have a couple pictures of it. But it was nice, you know, talking with the people and French people, and they honored us like we should be honored, or would be, you would think. But they were very grateful and very nice.

S: Because the war with Japan was not over, was there a sense of still having that on the horizon?

O: I don't think most people gave it a thought. I can't say for most people, but I don't think anybody paid a hell of a lot of attention to it. Because that was a whole separate thing. To us it applied, because we were on our way over there. I'd say, if they hadn't dropped the atom bomb and surrendered that quickly, we would have been over there. I don't know what island or whatnot, but they were actually gearing up, already gearing up at that time, for the primary invasion of Japan [scheduled for November 1945]. They knew that Japan was going to cost a lot of American lives. They knew that, and so they were ready; they had the troop ships there, they had everything. They were ready and, in fact, they did send our unit, they sent our unit through the US, they sent our other half through Marseilles, to be over there have been in position. That's what it would, but the atomic bomb changed all that.

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S: Where were you when V-J Day came? From what you said before, you were in the United States, right?

O: I was right here in St. Paul. I was home on thirty-day leave.

S: What do you remember about, first of all, the reaction in St. Paul on V-J Day?

O: Well, as I remember, V-J Day was celebrated here. There was, it was mostly celebrated in the taverns. They celebrated there. I don't remember a parade or nothing, because the war was, it was just over. But the rationing was still on, tire rationing, gas rationing, food rationing was still on. People were still, I'd call it still sacrificing.

S: Sure. How did the news of V-J Day affect you personally?



O: Well, the news of V-J Day... I was supposed to report to Fort Benning, Georgia. I was supposed to report to Fort Benning, and I got a wire saying not to report until I was notified. So that meant instead of having thirty days home, I got forty-five days home. What I did was, well, there was nothing to do at home, being just home on leave like this, I was just going to sit. So I went down and got my old job back and at Cudahy Packing Company.

S: While you were on leave?

O: While I was on leave. So I was making money on both ends (*laughs*).

S: That was okay with Uncle Sam, or they didn't know?

O: They didn't know. But I went down and got my old job back cutting meat at the Cudahy Packing Company. The day before I had to go back in the service, before I had to report back, I just told them there, and they said, "Fine, fine, see you when you get back." And that was it.

S: Did you report to Fort Benning?

O: Yeah, I was down there until Christmas [1945]. I got discharged at Christmas, the twenty-fourth of December.

S: So you were at Fort Benning for several months then after. What were you guys doing then?

O: Played football (*laughs*). Played football every day.

S: Was it just a backlog with discharging guys, is that what it was?

O: No, they had guys down there, they were all being processed out, but they didn't let anybody go right away. Not right away. Then right outside of Fort Benning, there's a town called Columbus, Georgia, and that's really a wild town.

S: Well, it's close to an Army base, so...

O: It's a wild, wild town. Most, a lot of people, would go down there and they got paid when they got there. They'd flood this town, and like all Army towns, the people would, they'd spend a lot of money drinking, getting drunk, getting thrown in jail. So we no sooner got down here, I was down there maybe a month I guess, and the army, to save expenses and whatnot, gave thirty day leaves to people. But they went according to your grade and seniority. The guy came into my barracks one day and he said, "Say, I think you're on, you can get a thirty day leave if you want to. There's ten guys ahead of you, but these ten guys can't go because they haven't got a dime, they don't have any money." They blew all their money in Columbus, where I didn't (*laughs*).

S: So they were stuck on base.

O: They were stuck on base, and if you wanted to go home for thirty days, we'll get you the papers. So I got the papers, and I got on a bus, a Greyhound bus, that was the cheapest. Went from there to Chattanooga, Chattanooga to Chicago, Chicago to the Twin Cities. I got home, and went to work again. So about two or three days before I was supposed to go back, I happened to read in the paper, "Greyhound Bus Company is on strike." So I said, oh golly. I sent a wire to my commanding officer, and I told him, "Greyhound Bus people are on strike and this is my transportation and my ticket. I would request another thirty days leave." So I got another wire back, "Request granted." So I went to work another thirty days (*laughs*).

S: You didn't spend much time at Fort Benning, did you?

O: No. I did go back, and all we did was play football, until the week of Christmas, and that was it. They discharged me there. Isn't that something?

S: One of the questions I often ask veterans is, what was the transition like? What I'm hearing from you, is that you're already transitioning before you left!

O: I transitioned, went to work and had a lot of fun on the side, and that was it.

S: Once you took the uniform off, it was right around Christmas 1945. When you came back to St. Paul, where were you living then?

O: On the East Side of St. Paul, where our family lived.

S: Did you move back with your folks?

O: Yeah.

S: And you had your job back at the packing house?

O: Yeah, I went back to work again the next week, after New Year's.

S: What would you say was, after a couple of years in the service, what was the hardest thing that you faced readjusting to being a permanent civilian?

O: Oh, nothing really. We had our, all the civilian soldiers, us people, had their lifestyle. Mine was working five days a week, and off on Saturday and Sunday.

**End of Tape 2, Side A. Side B begins at counter 000.**

S: Side four with Otto Schmaltz, on the second of September 2001. Otto, it sounds like you were never without a job when you got out, either. You weren't one of

these 52-20 guys [a \$20 unemployment benefit for 52 weeks, available to ex-servicemen].

O: No, I never took any 52-20. I went to work right away.

S: Yeah, in fact even before you were out. What was the easiest thing that you found being out of the service now?

O: Being out of the service? I don't know. *(pauses three seconds)* You know, when you got a job and you're working, and you're not skimping or scratching around... I was single, I wasn't married, I didn't have any family or children; all I had was my parents and my brother and sister. That was all. We didn't have any big problems of any kind. I was quite athletic, I did a lot of bowling and golfing and stuff like that. So, my time was well taken care of.

S: Would you say that the time after the war, in general, times were good for you?

O: I would say they were very good, yes. There's a lot of people that say no, they weren't. They were unemployed and couldn't work, and whatnot. But you have to remember even after the war, there was still a big shortage of men. And a lot of women were taking men's jobs. But there were a lot of jobs available, and a lot of places for men to work. People that did, like myself, we got ahead. We got ahead.

S: You were in the Army Reserves, is that right?

O: That's right, after World War II ended, I was discharged around Christmas '45. And the following year I reenlisted in the Army, for five years. They put you in a reserve unit, because they're discharging people hand over fist. They don't need any new ones, so they put everybody in the reserves. They put me in the reserves. That's how come I got called up for the Korean War, that's when they called me up. You would think they would, with the medical experience I had, I would have been a medic. But I wasn't; they made a combat infantryman out of me. Which they did, they needed people with guns, not snippers [reference to medical equipment].

S: So in Korea you were in an entirely different situation.

O: Yes.

S: Would you characterize the time in Korea, all in all, as more scary, or a more serious, experience than your time in France? Or just different?

O: Well, hardships were different; lifestyles were different. First of all, the situation over there was, the Koreans were very poor people. They had very few facilities. Very few good roads or things like that. Now I guess they do a little bit, but in 1950 they did not. Farmers were poor, farmers don't even grow enough, they never left their valley ever in their lifetime. Things like that, roads and that, and we were fighting people who were very smart, intelligent, and excellent soldiers. Much

better than us. We seemed to think that just because we were American, we had the best of this and the best of that, and that we were the best. Not so. The soldiers over there, we were actually, I would say, second or third rate soldiers.

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S: Really?

O: Yes. At the Battle of Twin Tunnels, where the railroad went through a mountain, there were two tunnels. To surprise some Chinese people in there, and they got rid of those. The Chinese, they were officers, and they were eating out of brass bowls and mahogany dishes, things like that. They had a, one guy had a fur hat, with fur. And with us, in order for us to hear anything at night, when it's twenty below zero, we had to lift our flaps up, because we couldn't hear nothing. But they had ear holes in their fur caps, which they could hear though; they didn't have to get cold. So I got this one god damned cap, and I wore it all damn winter. I threw mine away (*laughs*).

The next day after this, we routed these people out of there, and I went back into this cave and salvaged a couple of these brass bowls and these things they had, different stuff. I took them to my supply sergeant and said, "I want to send these home." So he sent them home for me. I got home and used them in the kitchen there for a long time. Then two years ago, or three years ago, they had a big typhoon hit Korea. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division had a museum there, they're the only ones that have a museum there, and this big typhoon and these high waters washed everything away. They lost all their artifacts, so they put a call out to people who had anything. I got to be well established with this John McLaughlin, the head of the museum down there, and I sent them this cap, and I think about thirty or thirty-five pictures of battle scenes that I took when I was over there. I took them, because I had a camera. I took battle scenes that the Army didn't even have, because the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division lost all their equipment. Band equipment, music equipment, cameras, photography, pictures. They lost everything when they got overrun at Kumi-Ri. This guy was so happy to get all this stuff, so I sent it to him, and he put it in the museum. He sent me pictures of the displays they made and that's where the stuff is. That's where it is.

S: Yeah, good for you.

O: It's not going to do me any good.

S: Final couple questions. I want to ask what the war meant to you, or what it means now. I have picked up a lot from our conversations today about how you felt, or how you feel, so I want to summarize that. When you were in France, 1944 and 1945, in a larger sense, what did the war, the whole thing, mean to you as an individual?

O: Well, see, I couldn't put a finger on the number or the percentage of people that are in the military that are uninformed, or don't give a damn. I can illustrate that very well by, most of the people that came from down south were very poor

soldiers. They didn't know nothing from nothing, they weren't educated, they didn't have any intelligence. And the thing is, what I've always thought is, when you get done with college—now I never went to college—but when you get done with high school or you get done with college, you are not through learning. You've got to keep learning all your life to know what's going on, to become intelligent. And down South, these people from down South, they are not intelligent. Consequently, you can't tell somebody, "Don't put it in like this, you got to put it in like that." You've got to stand over them.

In the Korean War, it was the last time units were segregated. Coloreds are great runners, you know, and they caused a lot of havoc and a lot of jeopardy for American units in Korea because they ran, they left the scene, just left, what we called bugged out. Take care of themselves. Bugged out and that was it. So consequently, even in World War I, coloreds were only used for quartermaster. They said, in World War I there was only one colored guy that got killed, and that was in a depot in Kansas City, when a sack of flour fell on him and broke his neck. That was the attitude. You wouldn't want them, no more than you'd want women in the military. Women in the military, outside of being nurses or clerical work and stuff like that, are uncalled for. Uncalled for. Even to be put in a position like driving a truck in a combat zone, or near a combat zone, is out of the question.

S: Do you think as you look back now, back on a long life, what does your experience during the war mean to you now?

O: Well, the experience of the war gives you a feeling that, as an American citizen, you really contributed something. Any person who answered the call to go to fight for his country, has got to say that was a great honor. That's what Eisenhower said the day before D-Day. He said, all of you people who have been selected, you have been selected by your country to invade France, and we're going to do it tomorrow. You've been selected and it's a great honor. And it is, it is. But not to people who are going to say, well, he's happy you're not coming back. But still you're there and you're willing to take the chance.

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S: That's interesting. In what way or ways would you say that the experience of the war changed your life, or changed you?

O: Well, for me you'd almost have to say two wars, because I wasn't off very long between the two [World War II and Korea]. But the period of time you enter service, like in my case it was two wars, that's quite a long time period. That's from 1943 to 1951, almost 1952.

S: Eight years.

O: Yes. Even though I was off at home part of those eight years, still the thought is there, when they call, I'm gone. That's what people had years ago, not only myself, but many, many people. Today you'd have, out of ten, you'd probably find one that

would be willing to go through the hardships. They're there for the benefits, but they're not there for the sacrifice. And that's the only sad thing about today. We found that out when all the people got married and fast marriages during the Vietnam War, and all the people went to Canada during the Vietnam War, to eliminate this [to avoid military service]. But they were here to participate in the benefits. Now not only myself, I felt very bad when Nixon pardoned all these people, and I think most soldiers that fought in the war went and contributed did feel the same way I do, that it never should have happened, the pardons.

S: The pardons, you mean?

O: The pardons. That's just like this deserter that sold all the things to Russia [espionage case, in the news during August 2001]. He's a deserter and he should be annihilated. This is the penalty you're going to have to pay for what you did. That's my feeling on this, and I still look at what's going on in the world and I know what's happening here, what's happening there. There's a lot of good people in the service and they do a good job, but by looking at some of these units, like I've been to Fort Snelling and seen some of those units and some of these sad people down there. They have the uniform, but they wouldn't even know how to open up a K ration. They're there for the money. They say, I'm going to enlist and I'm going to join the National Guard. They can't even open a K ration, or how would you like to live on a chocolate bar for three days. That kind of thing they never had. They've got to have a shower at least every day, or every two days or every other day.

S: It's a different world isn't it?

O: Yeah. A different world.

S: Let me ask you the final thing, do you have a favorite light hearted anecdote to wrap things up, something you remember?

O: No, I can't really say that I remember nothing like that. A lot of things happened in the Korean War, but they happened over in Europe, too. There's one thing that distinguishes American soldiers from a lot of other soldiers: they drink a lot. They drink a lot. If there's a tavern close by, near a base, fine; if not, they'll frequent the PX, the beer hall. Every camp, every fort has a beer hall, or two. I can remember the one in Fort Lewis, Washington. I think the beer hall opened up at seven o'clock and closed at maybe nine or ten o'clock. They used to pack them in there so much that they had the beer wagon, the beer truck itself, was parked outside, and all the kegs were inside the building and the cooler. About every fifteen minutes a barrel was rolled out the door and into the damn beer truck (*laughs*). And when the beer was gone, if it was ten o'clock it was gone, that was it. Tomorrow will be another day.

S: The truck would pull up full the next day, too, right?

O: Yeah. You went in there with five or six of your buddies and you bought pitchers of beer, and they didn't cost much, maybe fifty cents. A guy could sit there and drink

and have a good time, tell stories, have a good time. A lot of pleasant memories—everybody thinks it's all hardship and shooting, hardship and all this and that. Personally, I'd say you meet a lot of good people, you make a lot of good friends, and you have a lot of good times, too. If you're going to be a jackass, you're going to spend a big part of your time in the stockade, or doing KP on weekends. If you're a decent guy and a good guy, and get along with people, you're going to have a lot of friends, you're going to have a good time. You take the good with the bad.

S: As in life, I suppose.

O: You know, it's who you hang around with. Just like I'd say, I used to like to play golf. I don't golf anymore, but when you play golf, you pick the friends that want to play with. And you generally pick the guys that you like to play with and have a good time with. You play eighteen holes and you get done and you lie a little bit, and then you all sit around and have a drink or two and go home. And it's a great day. That's the way that goes. Life is what you make it.

S: Good point. Otto, thanks very much for this interview.

O: You're welcome.

## **END OF INTERVIEW**